TABLE TALK

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FOREWORD

There are many to whom Eternal Truth tends to become old fashioned; and the teachings, both moral and material, associated with it, out-of-date and obsolete in the light of modern scientific research. For such, the problems of the universe, as well as of conduct, which confront them today require, by the very fact of their modernness and the entirely novel conditions from which they spring, means of solution correspondingly novel—a new and important standard which shall be adequate for their comprehension, and which is not forthcoming.

In the course of my travels during the last few years—not only throughout the East, but on the Continent of Europe—I have come in contact with numbers of thinking men and women for whom religion—any religion—is becoming a dead-letter; simply because the religions with which they are familiar are based on a mysticism antagonistic to their reason; or because these religions regard progress of any sort, in a spirit of hostility, or timorous compromise—and because in neither case have those religions any actual bearing on the constantly progressing conditions of modern existence.

It is for such that this little book is primarily intended. In it I make no claim to have attempted to treat exhaustively of a theme—or succession of themes—which is limitless. I have, on the other hand, endeavored to deal as clearly as I can with a few—a very few—of the doubts and difficulties which have been brought to me during those years; and to show that, inasmuch as Human Reason is in itself a Divine Gift, there exists, and can exist no possible discrepancy, whether of spirit or letter, between scientific truth in its constant development, and the Eternal Truth in its unalterable fixity, as revealed by God Himself, thirteen hundred years ago.

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CHAPTER 1.

THE OBJECT OF RELIGION

I have been requested to say something on the object of Religion, a subject which has caused such a diversity of opinion and confusion of ideas. It has created quite different theologies, and diverse codes of morality in different parts of the world. Some say that the object of Religion is fulfilled when we give up all worldly affairs in pursuit of a godly life. With them Religion stands for renunciation. Others think that the function of Religion consists in bringing purity of life into the world of everyday.

With some, Religion, in its best form, came to redeem humanity from eternal perdition by showing us the way to appease an angered Deity, and to create a sort of reconciliation between the Creator and the creature; as if we had incurred Divine wrath even before our birth, without any action on our part. In short, the object of Religion has been formulated in different accents and stresses in various quarters. But the last Book of God, I mean the Quran, epitomizes it in one word. It makes *falah* the object for which religion came to humanity from its Maker.

I have purposely given here the original word from the text, as I fail to find its proper equivalent in any other language. In its ordinary meaning the word *falah* in Arabic, signifies success, but literally it means the burrowing out of what is hidden in anything. You cannot succeed in doing a thing of which you are not capable; consequently where there is a want of capacity, there is a want of success.

Success, therefore, consists in the working out of your latent faculties to your best ability. I am not concerned with what others say on the subject, but I have given you what the Quran describes as the object of Divine Revelation to humanity. Whatever of noble and

good is hidden in you must come out, whatever is in the form of potentiality in human minds must be converted into actuality.

Some think that to please God can be the only valid object of Religion. That is true, but one fails to understand in what consists the pleasure of God. If He created man for a certain purpose, do we not incur His wrath, if, through our actions, we bring that purpose to nothing? Divine glorification does not mean the singing of hymns; that is but a lip-gratitude which will not please even an average man. What about God? Divine glorification from the Quran's point of view, consists in human edification, and in order to please God, we cannot do better than help Him in the accomplishment of that grand object for which man was created. Therefore, to please God is really to work out our own evolution, and to bring to realization what our Creator has placed in us. In this lies our whole success. The Quran says the same elsewhere: "He who purifies himself and through that purification reaches his full-fledgement is successful, but he who has stunted his faculties meets failure." Again the book says, when it defines man's religion; "Turn your face strictly to the right Faith—Nature, given by God, in which He has created man; there cannot be change in the Make of God; it is the Religion".

In these words we have been given our Religion. My Religion is my own nature and to live religion is to work it out. Study your own Nature, try to find out what inestimable treasures lie in it, discover means whereby you may bring your Nature to fruition, and you have found your religion. Revelation from God, according to the Quran, therefore, came to enlighten us as to our own capacities, and to provide us with means to work them out to their perfection. To study your own Nature is, therefore, to study your own religion. "One who has known his own self," so says the noble Prophet, "has known his own God." See what wonderful capabilities you possess, bring them to their full fructification, and you have glorified your own Maker and lived the best religion you can possibly live; and this is Islam.

CHAPTER 2.

HEAVEN AND HELL

In this connection I think I must give you the Muslim conception of Heaven and Hell. With many, and I should say with almost all, adherents of faiths and creeds, to secure entry into Heaven and to keep away from the other place, has been believed, and in a way legitimately too, to be the main object of religion. Here again, let me draw your attention to the very words which the Quran has chosen to convey the ideas of Heaven and Hell.

Jannat is the word used in the Quran for heaven, and most eloquently it connotes the Quranic conception of Heaven. On one side it means something hidden and concealed from the naked eye; while the other meaning of *Jannat* is luxuriant and rank growth. May I draw attention to every clod of clay that you have come across today on your way to this place? It is dark and without any attraction for you, but Nature has endowed it with something very beautiful. Furrow it out; bring these clods of clay under some process of cultivation and this dirty earth is presently transformed into a beautiful garden.

This phenomenon you observe in your every day experience; everything that comes in your way contains something hidden in it, which, when evolved, makes it valuable. So everything in Nature becomes Heaven and Hell. Things are in the condition of Hell if their inherent faculties become stunted and developed; but they become Heaven when these qualities receive full fructification.

Man's mind is a microcosm—a miniature of the whole universe. It is of goodliest fibre, possesses the highest capabilities, as the Quran says, and can make unlimited progress. Think of the numberless channels of human energy, and God alone knows what

inexhaustible stores we still possess, which remain yet to be worked out. One who has attained perfect self-realization has created his own Heaven, and one who has stunted his faculties is condemned to that fire of God which will come out of the human heart itself (The Quran). Do not you experience some sort of heart-burning, when you see a fellow man, who began his life with you with equal opportunities with yourself, become successful by working out his faculties, while you remain on the shelf, simply because you did not make proper use of your time and opportunity? Such a heart-burning in your present life may give you a very hazy idea of one of the several aspects of Hell set forth in the Quran. I am not concerned here with what other religions say about Heaven and Hell. There may be a lake of fire with burning brimstone in it and with gnashing of teeth, or there may not be. Similarly something is said of Heaven in Christian theology. Those who care to ride clouds with golden crowns on their heads while singing hymns to God, day and night, may please themselves with such an idea of Heaven; but I do not care for such a stationary life; I must have something to develop, some sort of elevation; everything around me is on the move to progress; destruction in Nature is only a name for change of form; nay, destruction in some cases means a new life, a new course of progress.

Man being the best product of Nature, and the finest handiwork of God cannot do other than progress. These seventy or eighty years of life are too short for our full development. Innumerable faculties remain undeveloped in many of us when we die; if in hundreds they receive their sublimation, in millions they remain dormant when death comes; and if everything in every atom comes to actuality, what about those things in man, that remain hidden in him in this life, which, under Islamic teaching, is only a life of preparation, while the time of fruition begins on the other side of the grave? If I have put my faculties into working order, my death simply means an entrance into a life of further progress, — and this is *Jannat* (Heaven) of the Quran.

PRESENT LIFE: LIFE OF PREPARATION: THE EARTH AND THE HUMAN HEART

You make your heaven and hell yourself. Your heart supplies you with the bed-rock for further construction. Just as you break the earth, and till the ground, and prepare the land, and then a small thing like a seed, with the help of water from above, enables the earth to pour its innumerable and inestimable treasures before you—and we have not as yet been able to exhaust its resources—even so the same earth, in miniature, you have got again in its most evolved form, in the shape of your own heart, in your body.

It contains, in extract, every ingredient of the earth. "Verily We have created man as an extract from the earth" (The Quran). The earth, with all its ingredients, going through various processes of refinement, has assumed the shape of the human heart, and retains all its original forces on a sublimated scale; and, as in the case of the earth, we have been unable to exhaust its resources. As the earth produces beautiful things physical in nature, the human heart creates things moral and spiritual. Both need water from heaven to bring their forces into operation.

Matter in the earth needs rain in material form, and rain comes from the clouds; but the human heart is the repository of moral and spiritual things; the rain necessary for its fertility cannot assume physical shape. It must bear affinity to the matter it has to work upon. The animal heart gives birth to consciousness, which, in the human frame, needs the further refinement of the emotions and passions. These are to be converted into morality, that is, ethics and philosophy; morality again, in its turn, is to be evolved into spirituality. Now, such a sublimation of animal emotions on the plane of the human heart could not, of course, be effected by material rain from the clouds. But it needed rain—something in a form of which it would be conscious, something in definite shape; something which would have to do more with mentality than with our physical nature. The rain did come, and it came in the suitable form. It took the form of words revealed from the lips of God. It helped man to dig the soil

of his own heart, and produced a healthy crop. The Quran opens this truth to us in the following words: "Know that Allah gives life to the earth after death; indeed. We have made the communications clear to you that you may understand" (Chap. 57 : 17).

Is it now difficult for you to appreciate the teachings of the Quran as to the real object of religion, and revelation from God? The Book of Islam teaches us that we have been given the highest capabilities, and that the progress in store for us knows no bounds (Chap. 95). We have to work out our resources and bring them to a certain stage of development in this our sojourn on the earth, and then to be translated to higher regions for further growth; we cannot proceed an inch further in our journey beyond the grave, unless and until we have attained that certain amount of perfection that is to be attained in this life. In other words, we have to achieve certain qualifications before we enter into the kingdom of heaven for further progress. If we lack the required qualifications, or have corrupted or stunted the progressive nature given to us at our birth here, this diseased condition of soul at our death, will necessitate purification for a fresh start. We have to attain some kind of perfection before leaving this earthly frame; but if we fail to do it when the soul leaves the body, we shall need some time and place when and where to make up our short-comings, and prepare ourselves for the heavenly life.

MUSLIM CONCEPTION OF HELL

Hell, as the Quran teaches, comes to provide us with the place needed. We do not believe in the eternity of the Hell. Muslim Hell, more or less, is of a purgatorial, and consequently of a temporary, nature. It helps us to cleanse the soul from all the blemishes that disqualify it from soaring higher and higher into regions Divine. If a healthy physique is needed for a perfect growth on this earth, a healthy soul is essential for spiritual uplifting in the Ethereal Kingdom. If the doors of hospitals and infirmaries have been opened by the benevolence of man to treat us physically, and remove defects of the body, Hell, under divine policy, opens its arms to receive every soul leaving the earth in a diseased condition, for the neces-

sary cure. It purges it of all its evils, and enables it to enter into the land of happiness and health. It is not the wrath, but the merciful providence of God which creates Hell. Just like a mother who, out of the affection of her heart, brings her baby under a surgical operation in order to relieve him of the diseased organ, you will find the Hell not less affectionate in restoring you to the spiritual health which you have lost in this world, through your folly and wickedness. Like a kind mother, Hell has also got able surgeons at her disposal in the persons of "angels of Hell," who will bring your moral ulcers and spiritual gangrenes under their sharp knife; the operation must cause excruciating pain and unbearable agonies with "crying and gnashing of teeth;" you will have to take bitter and burning purgatives, but all this comes from the affection of the mother — Hell — into whose arms you have been given for the restoration of your health. It is to this effect that the Book of God says the following: *Wa ummuhoo havayah* — and *the Hell is his mother.*

CHAPTER 3.

TRANSMIGRATION OF SOULS

Here I think, perhaps I should say something on the theory of "Transmigration of Souls" which plays a great part in Hindu theology and is also appealing to the fancy of Europe not a little. You may not accept the theory, but you cannot cavil at the logic of it; more especially as it has received its genesis from the same causes which, in Muslin theology, brought Hell into existence. If life on the earth is a life of preparation in which we have to attain certain qualifications essential for our entry into regions Divine "Brahma loka" in the words of Krishna; if certain conditions, exclusively belonging to the earth, are necessary for such preparation, will it not be necessary, so would argue a Hindu divine, for us to return to earthly life again, if we have left it without acquiring the necessary perfection? We had to attain certain experiences not available in the next world; we left this world without doing so, and consequently we do need to come back to it again. The logic is not bad and the reasoning is quite plausible; but they do not coincide with what I find in the course of evolution observable in the universe.

From ethereal specks and electronic collocations up to the human form, all manifestations and specializations of nature are constantly on the move to progress. They do not retrogress, nor do they retrace a single step that has once been taken on the path of progress. Things pass from region to region, and are translated from one state of being to another — sometimes perfect in condition, sometimes imperfect — in the course of progress; but they are never permitted to return to the state of being they have left, to make up a deficiency.

If a thing has passed a stage of growth (or state of being) before it has been able to reach that perfection which it ought to have attained

while in that stage of being then new means, such as may be necessary for the rectification of the defect, are straightway forthcoming in the new region (stage of growth or state of being) to which it has been translated. For example: — a seed may leave a tree in defective condition. It need not go back into the trunk of the tree it came from, to make up its deficiencies; you have only to plant it in a land with better climate, and to manure it properly, and this same defective seed will sprout into a healthy tree, far more fruitful perhaps than the mother tree; and what is true in the vegetable kingdom is true also in other kingdoms. A child before its birth has to receive a certain amount of growth in the embryonic state, but if he is born with some physical defects he need not, and does not, go back into the mother's womb for the fault to be remedied. Surgical aid provides the cure — and though such methods of rectification are, without doubt, ultranatural and involve pain, yet they are the only means for amendment. And if a child, born with some physical infirmity, has never been permitted to retrace his footsteps to the womb for the purpose of having that infirmity removed, why should a person who has finished his course of earthly life — whatever the condition in which he passed from it may have been — ever come to this place again?

If therefore, this rule be universal in Nature, then that which has failed to attain to the requisite standard of perfection in one state of being is passed into the state of being next highest, there to have its deficiencies supplied and its deformities corrected; and if such system be the more expedient and the more conducive to rapidity of real progress; then I fail to find any reason, cogent or otherwise, for subscribing to the theory of the transmigration of the soul.

Moreover, this same phenomenon that I have described, is observable in every stage through which matter has to pass before assuming human shape. The food we assimilate every day will eventually take the form of genital sperma, which will presently convert itself into the human shape of a child. The food has to pass through many stages before it reaches that stage. Things not properly cooked are sometimes taken in; they cause pains in the stomach, but the

trouble is removed by treatment. The food is not sent back from the stomach to the kitchen to be cooked again.

We take medicine to help the digestion, and enable the food to pass through the regions of the blood. Sometimes when, whether from some defect of the stomach or through the function of a diseased liver we produce poor blood, we seek a remedy in medicine, but no drop of that poor blood is allowed to return to the liver or stomach for the purpose of rectification; and the reason is simply this—that the means and circumstances necessary for blood formation exist in the stomach and liver only—not in the heart and the arteries of the blood. Though poor blood may germinate unhealthy seed, yet new means are ever at hand by which it may be restored to its proper conditions. The sperma never returns, never transmigrates, to the blood-regions, to make good defects in its growth.

If, therefore, what we have thus observed in the invariable processes of Nature can be considered to give us a reasonable basis for our belief in the matters of which I have been speaking, I am constrained to reject the theory of the transmigration of the soul, and accept the theory of Hell as propounded in the Quran.

THEORY OF KARMA

Closely allied to the "Transmigration of the Soul" is the doctrine of Karma (actions). The two are one and the same theory, representing different aspects of the same doctrine; the one is substantive, the other adjective. The doctrine of Karma takes for its genesis the diversity of circumstances in which people find themselves at their birth, from causes beyond their control.

If some are born in affluence, poverty and indigence attend the birth of others; some are born into the world with bodily defects, while others are blest with every bodily perfection; and this disparity, producing arbitrarily, as it does, comfort and discomfort, happiness and misery, does seem, if we are in no degree to be held responsible for it, a strange blot on the impartiality of Divine Providence.

The theory of Karma, in Hindu theology however, thus explains this seeming incongruity in the Divine dispensation. All that we receive at our birth in the form of happiness or misery, and all the differences in social status that come into our being at birth, are, the Karmaist says, the outcome of our deeds in the life before the present. We take birth after birth to complete our course on this earth, and what we sow in the one, we must reap in the next.

No one would question the logic of the view that human society works on the Law of Actions. That actions must bear their fruit is the basic principle of every other religion, except Paulinism. Differences in social position, in many cases, undoubtedly arise from our own actions. We are the creators of our own comfort and misery. But if inferiority in the social scale in which every person finds himself at his birth in relation to another, must be ascribed to something wrong in one's bygone life, evil must needs, according to this doctrine, become essential for the very working of human society. Difference of occupation and variety of employment are the motive power of the social machinery. We must serve each other in a wide variety of differing capacities, if adequate contribution is to be made to the common comfort; for differentiation means progress, and progress is born of diversity. If, however, difference of this kind is to be attributed to some past wrong, then comfort and progress must demand the existence of evil; men of one generation must commit sin so that, in the next, they may be reborn in the lower for the purpose of contributing to the happiness of the upper social stratum.

Superiority in A means inferiority in B, and the happiness of one person demands sacrifice from the other. And if sacrifice is essential for the proper working of society, evil and wrong which are supposed to be the cause of it under the aforesaid theory, become also essential for human progress. But a doctrine which makes evil a necessary item in the Divine Providence, is a gross insult to a Muslim's conception of God; and if, in this life, difference between man and man does in fact arise from past acts, how are we to explain that fundamental difference which must have existed at the very inception of

our species? The process of procreation demands difference of sex. You may ascribe your present difference from another man to some cause in your previous life, but where were the actions which caused difference of sex in the first pair, whence our species had its being? Difference in sonship and fatherhood is another difference which must exist even at the beginning of life. How are we to explain these differences when there was no previous life and consequently no previous action?

HAPPINESS A BENEFICENCE AND NOT A FRUIT OF ACTION

If all our present means of happiness are given to us as a reward for past actions, how are we to explain the happiness which comes to us providentially? Much of our happiness is derived from the varied manifestations of Nature, the sun, the moon, the earth and all that it provides; and the proportion of happiness that we acquire through our actions depends too, upon the working out, by us, of sources of Nature which were in existence long before man came on the earth. How can all this be the reward of our past actions? We cannot live without the pre-existence of millions of things in the universe; they all add to our happiness; and they all come as a beneficence of God, and not in reward of actions. Divine Providence, as exhibited in Nature, makes Divine Blessing, which is the main source of our happiness, a pre-existing thing; while the theory of Karma makes our actions to pre-exist the Divine Blessing, which is absurd on the face of it. If all our happiness has to arise from our actions, our happiness would be next to nothing. What comes out of our actions in the shape of happiness sinks into insignificance when compared with what we get as Divine Blessings. The Quran lays special stress on this point, as well as on the difference of sex, which, it says, is to be found in everything coming out of the earth, when dealing with the theory of the transmigration of the soul, in the following words: —

> "And a sign to them is the dead earth: We give life to it and bring forth from it grain, so they eat of it. And we make therein gardens of palms and grapevines, and We make

springs to flow forth in it, that they may eat of the fruit thereof, and their hands did not make it; will they not be grateful? Glory be to Him Who created pairs of all things, of what the earth grows, and of their kind and of what they do not know."

THE THEORY WEAKENS SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY

If our actions receive their birth and mold from our beliefs, we should not entertain any tenet or doctrine which tends to ruin our sense of responsibility, and to create in us moral or mental imbecility.

Fatalism, in the received sense of the word, was condemned by Islam for this very reason. Atonement is another condemnable belief. If another has to bear my burden, incentive for action, on my part, is lost. Similarly, we strive our hardest to alleviate our misery, because we believe that it is possible to alleviate it; but when we find that our trouble is absolutely without remedy, our zeal is gone, for what, in such a case, is the use of trying? Our misery, under the theory of Karma, has come to us as the fruit of some past actions. It cannot be undone, and all our efforts to undo it will be in vain. I committed some wrong in a previous life, I must suffer for its consequences in the present life, and all my efforts to be free from it are simply to give the lie to that theory. If A is down with cholera which he has got on account of some past wrong, it hardly befits him to seek medical relief if he subscribes to the principle of Karma. The theory thus makes man a fatalist, and thereby impedes human progress.

Pain in this life, they say, is the penalty of past actions. If persecution and want of comfort may come within the category of pain, no progress in human society has, till now, been achieved without them. The world has seen its best benefactors in the persons of prophets, reformers and philosophers, but, unfortunately, they are the persons who have always been subjected to every kind of persecution. Similarly all scientific discoveries, to which we owe so much of our comfort and happiness, are the fruits of pain and hardship. Should we believe that all these great teachers and inventors were wicked men and sinners of the first water in the past life, because

they have been for the most part persecuted people and leading the most painful lives?

No one gets happiness without some pain, and pain is the penalty of sin. Evil, therefore, becomes essential for enjoying happiness in the life to come. Such a theory can have but few opportunities of giving birth to high character. If A receives some injury from B, it is, as a Hindu would say, to make up for some injury received by B from A in his previous existence. Thus, offense becomes a justification in the eye of a culprit, if he believes in Karma. I need not be thankful to my benefactors, because I receive from them what I gave to them in charity merely in the life past. The more I think upon the subject, keeping in view all the consequences to which such beliefs must logically lead, the more I am strengthened in my conviction that the theory in dispute is a belief most unfavorable to our moral growth.

The explanation given by our Holy Quran of the misery around us, and of the social differences which we have been discussing, appeals to me more, as it strengthens my sense of responsibility.

I am told in the Quran that I am not only the engineer of my own life, but that I am also responsible for the happiness and misery of my own descendants. Our interest in our children is, in most cases, stronger than our interest in our own selves. The welfare of the family often keeps its members away from such misdeeds as are sometimes unscrupulously committed by those who lead single lives.

If the consequences of every action I do be shared by my own children, I shall make my actions more steady and righteous. But if I alone have to reap what I sow, despair or temptation may, sometimes, lead me to extremes. Belief therefore, that children born with bodily defects, owe their misfortune to paternity, which sometimes may come to them from three or four generations back, will generally prove a more efficacious check to intemperate actions, than the belief that the children are themselves responsible for their physical deficiencies. A person may not care much for the evil consequences

of his actions if they are to be confined to him; but his care to see his family happy may reform him.

Here are two explanations of our present misery, one given by the theory of Karma and the other advanced by the Quran. No one can vouch for the truth of either on the strength of personal experience. We come out of oblivion and go into the same. No man, with a sensible head on his shoulders, can refer to what he has done in the previous life, though one is constrained to give a hearing to sundry silly stories, out of courtesy to certain "bluestockings," whose fancy has been attracted by the theory of which I have been speaking. No doubt one cannot speak with certainty on the subject; but of the two theories, that expounded by the Quran seems to me more wholesome in its effect on human character. The Hindu theory creates fatalism and weakens the sense of responsibility; and the most hideous part of it is, that it makes sin an essential for happiness and civilization.

CHAPTER 4.

LIFE AFTER DEATH

RESURRECTION: CONTINUITY OF INDIVIDUALITY: SPIRITUALISM etc.

Belief in life after death is an essential article of faith in every religion. It has a most wholesome effect in molding human character, and is at the same time a source of consolation to the disappointed heart, and a treasure of happiness to one in distress; especially when the misery that comes to him is undeserved. It is moreover an efficacious check on wickedness and iniquity, even in cases where there is least chance of detection.

On the other hand, disbelief in accountability for his actions after his death will naturally weaken a man's sense of responsibility. Morality, in the absence of such belief, will become only the soundest method of securing happiness in life, and, therefore, merely a matter of expedience. There will be no incentive to practice virtue for the sake of virtue, and no person will even shrink from committing wrong, if it serves his purpose, provided he can avoid, or disregard, public censure. But all this, as a skeptic would say, is apology and nothing more. It does not, of itself, afford a ground for belief in a life beyond the grave.

Belief in life after death has always been a hard problem for teachers of religion to solve, and they have from time to time been hard pressed by skepticism. It confronted Jesus in the form of the Sadducees. They went to the Master for enlightenment on the subject, and the reply of Jesus was, that if there is no life after death, why did they style their God "God of Abraham and Moses?" By doing so, the Sadducees, so argued Jesus, did evince their belief in the life after death of those Patriarchs. The logic of the gentle

philosopher from Galilee, however, was not without its flaws. It perhaps silenced the rationalists of his time, but the Sadducees of today will not fail to detect the fallacy of petitio principi, in the argument of Jesus. He started with the presumption, lacking in proof, that the Sadducees were believers in the life after death of the Patriarchs, if they styled their God the God of Abraham.

Though the belief in question is the cornerstone of every religion, yet the whole sacred literature of pre-Islamic days is wanting in its proof. It will be but waste of time and energy, to go, page after page, into the whole Bible record, or the Vedic and Zoroastrian Scriptures, in search of something logical to substantiate the theory of Resurrection and continuity of human individuality, after this earthly frame has once been disintegrated; and this paucity of logic is chiefly responsible for Materialism in Europe, and has raised up Atheistic tendencies everywhere in the Westernized mind. Were it not a wide digression from my subject, and perhaps somewhat out of place, I could give excellent reason to show that the recent conflagration into which the whole world has been dragged, was not kindled by zeal for the cause of right on the part of all belligerents, but was the outcome of the lustful and greedy disposition of European nations, hardened by their disbelief in life after death which is a natural consequence of the feebleness of Church theology in the face of Rationalism.

Spiritism, popularly called Spiritualism, has, however, arisen in modern days to combat Materialism of this kind. Spirits of dead persons have been seen and talked to, so the report goes, by some of the new creed, which has managed to secure support from certain of the luminaries on the scientific horizon, Sir Oliver Lodge and Sir Arthur Conan Doyle amongst them. Some of my best friends are Spiritualists, and have had personal experiences of this sort; and I have not the least reason to doubt the veracity of their statements.

Besides, such experiences are not new to Muslim divines. The Church in the West may brand them as devilry and witchcraft, as she used to brand scientific researches in the days of Roger Bacon;

but Islam has no need to question them for it has an extensive literature on the subject dating from very early days. I may observe, however, that such experiences, being personal, cannot afford a substantial proof for others to believe in the life hereafter. A skeptic would accept the story of the Spiritualist as a true statement of what the latter thought he had experienced, but might explain it away in a variety of ways — illusion, imagination etc.

Again, people who claim to have such visits from the world beyond the grave, forget to note or tell all the circumstances which attended their spirit-experiences, and so make their case weak. Moreover, a good deal of swindling, unfortunately, is going on in the name of Spiritualism; though the creed in my belief is very opportune in these materialism-ridden days.

Finally such a method of proving life after death, is not of permanent value. It is like the miracle of the olden days. A miracle might very well satisfy some of those immediately around its worker, but it became a mere story in subsequent times, and as such, could not command universal acceptance.

Beliefs, like that in question, which constitute basic principles of religion, should be founded on rational grounds. These, however, need not necessarily come within the scope of our senses, especially if the things to be proved lie beyond our normal comprehension. Reasoning by analogy may be helpful, but it is not sound logic and is often misleading. We may, however, safely refer to one class of phenomena in nature to prove another, if the principle underlying both is one and the same. Most of our knowledge, indeed, in the realm of science has come to us in this way.

It is not the question of Resurrection, but that of the continuity of the individual personality of every man removed from this world to the next, that arouses skepticism. If birth, death, and resurrection, may be taken to be nothing more than terms for the combination, disintegration and re-combination of various elements and atoms that go to create different organisms in the course of nature, the

whole thing becomes clear as it unfolds itself under our daily observation, each year, in the vegetable kingdom. Death overtakes the tree each autumn, while spring comes unfailingly to give it life anew. Deeper observation, by a scientific eye, will also show that every tree has all its distinctive features restored at this spring resurrection. In winter we find trees stripped of all their foliage, flowers and fruits. All their constituent elements become disintegrated, mixing confusedly with the rest of the elemental and atomic world in the universe. The dry and dead trunks, though still enveloped by the same mass of matter that nourished them in the past spring, can no longer assimilate it, since the vivifying principle has gone from them. Then comes spring, with its showers, and the water from the heavens brings new life to every member of the vegetable kingdom. All the elemental components that clothed and constituted the individual entity of each particular tree, rush back to it again; spring winds, rain and sunshine, bring new life; the whole of dead Nature springs up again in resurrection, and every tree resumes its own individuality, with all its distinctive features. The last Book of God, revealed to man to create in him an intelligent belief in all religious truths, has not failed to refer to the spring- phenomenon, when dealing with the doctrine of Resurrection, in the following words:

"Almighty God and the glorious Quran. Nay, they wonder that there has come to them a Warner from among themselves, so the unbelievers say: What when we are dead and have become dust? That is a far (from probable) return. We know indeed what the earth diminishes of them, and with Us is a writing that preserves. Nay, they rejected the truth when it came to them, so they are (now) in a state of confusion. Do they not look up to heaven above them how We have made it and adorned it and it has no gaps. And the earth, We have made it plain and cast in it mountains and We have made to grow therein of all beautiful kinds; to give sight and as a reminder to every servant who returns frequently (to Allah). And We send down from the cloud, water abounding in good, then We cause to grow thereby gardens and the grain that is reaped; and the tall palm trees having spadices closely set one above another. A sustenance for

the servants, and We give life thereby to a dead land; thus is the rising." (The Quran, ch. 50 : 1-11).

A thing once come to life, never meets destruction, as long as the universe is existing. It contains in it inherent qualities that must come to perfection through one or more shapes or stages. Death is but the name of its passing from one stage to another. But in this translation and transformation, everything manages to maintain its individual entity up to its final development. In the course of evolution, whenever things reach a certain stage of perfection, they begin to lose all those accessories which contributed to their existence in that particular stage; then they die and disappear, but they never become annihilated; they assume a new shape of a size imperceptible to human senses. Their further potentialities remain in abeyance for a time — a period called Barzakh in Muslim theology, i.e. the period intervening between death and resurrection — then they rise again for further progress, with every favorable circumstance to aid them.

But apart from all the question of the preservation of our personal individualities after death, even our actions and movements, though lost sight of when once performed, remain intact in that great repository of Nature, and may be brought before us when needed.

Miss .... sings in America, but her melodies are recorded in Paris and heard in Berlin. It would have been an impossibility for her to do so, if her utterances had not been first recorded on the big disc of Nature, before the Parisian disc was prepared. Similarly, wireless telegraphy could not have come to our aid if there were no provision in Nature for the permanent preservation of every note and sound that once receives utterance; Cinema pictures have come to prove that all our other movements will likewise remain preserved in the film of nature, and can be brought to us at any time, as a witness to our past conduct. God-given Science has stepped forward after all to establish the very Quranic truths that, only the other day, aroused ridicule from ignorant Christian Missionaries. The Holy Book, emphasizing the accountability of our actions on the Day of Judgement, says the following: "On that day we would set a seal upon their mouths, and their

hands shall speak to Us, and their feet shall bear witness of what they earned" (ch. 36, v.65). The Book of God makes mention also of another interesting natural phenomenon that has recently come within the ken of science, and goes to prove still further, the continued existence of individuality, after whatever may be its present form has been lost.

The fire which comes from ignited wood is not the product — the child of the tree. It derives, in the first instance, from the world's great luminary, in the form of sunlight; then, clothing itself with hydrogen and carbon, which it separates from water and carbonic acid gas, it assumes the shape of a tree—sometimes called, for this reason, "bottled sunshine," by way of popular explanation of a scientific process. What we call the "burning" of fire, or rather the burning of the tree, is only the process of separating the fire from the tree's other components—that is—hydrogen and carbon, and here we find continuity of individual entity, not of fire only, but of other things too, with mathematical exactitude.

Suppose therefore, one unit of fire to be spent in one unit of water, and another in one of carbonic acid gas, with a view to separating their respective components, the result would be—two units of fire from sunlight producing between them two units of hydrogen from water, and one unit of carbon from carbonic acid gas. And suppose that the two units of hydrogen, and the one unit of carbon, combined to produce one cubic inch of wood in a tree, then that piece of wood, when ignited, will give back exactly two units of fire, two units of hydrogen and one of carbon. They will all go back to make units of sunshine, water, and carbonic acid gas of the same magnitude as those from which they originally came. Look at it how you will, it is a circumstance — a problem that cannot well be passed over. How did the Holy Prophet of God (Peace be upon him) divine these, and a hundred similar secrets of Nature, which have taken many centuries to come to our knowledge—how is it that they are actually mentioned in the Quran to explain and illustrate its teaching, if the Book itself was not revealed to him from God?

This phenomenon of fire, which is perhaps the best illustration of the continuity of entities when they lose one shape and assume

other forms, has been thus beautifully referred to in the Quran in elucidation of the subject under discussion. It says: — "Does not man see that We have created him from the small life germ? then lo! he is an open disputant. And he strikes out a likeness for Us and forgets his own creation. Says he: Who will give life to the bones when they are rotten? Say: He will give life to them Who brought them into existence at first, and He is cognizant of all creation. He who had made for you the fire (to burn) from the green tree, so that with it you kindle (fire)" (ch. 36. v. 77-80).

All the illustrations I have as yet taken from the Quran, refer, no doubt, to things material, and may not perhaps satisfy those who seek proof of the continuity of individual consciousness after death; this being, one may say, ultra-material. Consciousness in the first place shows itself in the animal organism. It becomes individualized in the human frame. One man differs from another, not only in physique and outward appearance, but in his moral, mental and spiritual attainments. In short, every person possesses a marked and distinctive personality in his passions, morals and the other components of his consciousness; whether he will possess the same at his resurrection, is the question which lies at the root of the whole doctrine of life after death and that of the Day of Judgment. Individual accountability after death for actions done in life can scarcely be imagined, if there be not a continuation of the consciousness which inspired those actions. The Quran could not give a better illustration in proof of this doctrine than the following, which we find in Sura "Tariq" (ch. 86). "There is not a soul but over it is a keeper. So let man consider of what he is created. He is created of water pouring forth; coming from between the back and the ribs. Most surely He is able to return him (to life). On the day when hidden things shall be made manifest."

The life-germ, microscopic as it is in its size, is the repository of all the physical, intellectual and moral features of its source. In a word, sperma is the vehicle by which the individual consciousness of the father is carried to his children. It becomes effected when combining with the ovum, and receives a tinge of the mother's pecu-

liarities. Sometimes the genital seed brings the traits of forefathers from generations far removed, thus proving conclusively that the essential constituent parts of a thing can be epitomized in something microscopic; that leaving their source in a form that is imperceptible, they straightway become the nucleus for yet further development. Death, as I have before said, does not mean annihilation. Death is but the separation of a member of a particular species from the rest of his class, his translation to another and higher state of existence, itself ever progressive onward to the goal. Man has rightly been called "a miniature of the universe." His heart represents the earth, in its shape as well as in its qualities. It contains within itself the essence of the whole earth. As the Quran says: "And certainly We created man of an extract of clay" (ch. 23. v. 12).

A new world of passions becomes created in man's heart called human consciousness; there they must attain to a certain stage of perfection in this life, that is to say, must be sublimated into high morals, philosophy and spiritualities, before leaving this world for further progress in the life to come. In some cases they reach the required perfection in the human frame, but, in general, their success is only partial and must, for their future development, wait for the inevitable accident in life that is popularly termed death. At death, at the moment of dissolution—something gaseous in form, visible in trance to those alone in whom the spiritual faculties of their nature are developed in an exceptionally high degree, may be observed to rise from the human body, through the head, and ascend heavenward. Herein is contained the whole of the individual consciousness possessed by the dead man in this life. It remains in the ethereal world suspended, with all its faculties for progress preserved, but in abeyance, during that period of waiting which Muslim theology calls Barzakh. It will remain so till the day of resurrection, when it will take on a new garb for the furtherance of its progress, which is limitless and knows no bounds.

"Certainly We created man in the best make; then We render him the lowest of the low, except those who believe and do good, so they shall have a reward never to be cut off". (ch. 95 v.4-6).

CHAPTER 5.

EVIL AND ITS GENESIS

The origin of evil has always been a difficult problem both for religion and philosophy. Its solution has constantly baffled them both. Crude notions and inaccurate ideas have given rise to erroneous doctrines in religion, and a wrong philosophy or conception of the principles of life. With the old Zoroastrians in Persia, Evil and Good came from two gods; the God of Evil, and the God of Good. Mankind became a plaything in the hands of these two deities; they remained always at war with each other, and whichever of the two happened to have the upper hand for the time being, made man an instrument to work out his dictates. Good and Evil thus ruled in the world alternately from time to time.

The Church in the West, with its half apostle and half logician-philosopher St. Paul at its head, made sin a legacy. Man received it by inheritance, and could not rid himself of it. At the very outset, man's nature was contaminated and sin became innate in it, "as if the machine," to quote Lord Headley, "became amiss at the beginning."

He could not set it right for thousands of years, till at last he chanced upon a new method for its proper working, some two thousand years ago. But unfortunately the new scheme also failed. Christianity, it is true, did evince some hopeful signs, when it was confined to slaves and serfs; but from the days of the Royal Conversion down to the present time, it has walked knee-deep in blood—to say nothing of the other forms of evil that have through all that period, borne rule openly in Christendom.

Jesus himself is a noble pattern of humanity, and his teachings surely lead to righteousness; they may not be comprehensive enough to meet all the manifold phases of human life, but no one can deny

their beauty and sublimity. Yet drink, gambling and prostitution constitute the Nemesis which attends Christianity wherever it goes, and this would seem to indicate that the Divine Scheme which had for its pivot the tragic scene of Calvary, had also failed in its object. This kind of theology, which bears the name of Christ, is not creditable to its authors, nor does it add any dignity to the Object of their adoration. Our nature is not of our own making. It was given to us with all its capabilities, for good or evil, by the Creator. Sin, if innate in it, becomes a gift from God to His creatures; and the use of a divine gift should not entail punishment on us. If a dog cannot be held responsible for keeping his tail erect or his head downwards — and his justification is that he acts at the promptings of nature — we can hardly be called upon to account for our evil deeds; and, under all principles of justice and equity, we should not merit any punishment for failing to walk on the road of righteousness if our nature has not been made to do so; while to act according to one's nature, within proper limits, is entirely consistent with propriety and decorum. It simply comes to this, that we are doing right whenever we do wrong, provided it be within the limits sanctioned by society. This may sound paradoxical, and a contradiction in terms, but the premises put forward by the Christian Church force us to this, the logical conclusion.

To Buddha, on the other hand, the very existence of man is a loathsome thought, if we accept what we read of him in Buddhistic records. Trouble and misery, the fruit of evil, dominate human destiny; and man's only liberation, according to Buddha, lies in annihilation. Why man, the supreme product of elemental combination, was created at all, if misery only is to be his lot, while the rest of nature is simply beauty and sublimity, is an enigma to be solved by the upholders of such theories. Nature in itself must be sheer wickedness, if its best handiwork, man, has become the personification of evil and consequently the target of all trouble and tribulation. Hindu philosophers have no better solution of the problem to offer. Nothing that they have said succeeds in rebutting the presumption that Parabrahm (Great God) is the author of evil; and the theory of Karma or the transmigration of souls would appear, rather than not, to justify the Divine Intelligence in dispensing evil to mankind.

The whole world would have remained in darkness on this subject, had not the last Book of God, I mean the Quran, come with the true solution, and given the final and decisive word on it. All-merciful and All-beneficent God, acknowledged by all men as the fountain of good, cannot be the source of evil, directly or indirectly. Everything which comes from God is good, and for the benefit of mankind. All that is created by Him is to serve human ends, if properly used; in other words, everything in heaven and earth, including every human faculty, has its appointed utility. All things possess particular properties which work to our advantage, if used properly; and within given limits.

The one essential aim and object of all knowledge and science is to discover these limits, the transgression whereof creates the harmful influence which we, in popular parlance, term evil. We do good when we use the gifts that God has given us within the limits ordained by Him. When we exceed those limits we do evil. Let me take medicine as an illustration. Medicines may be opposite in their effects, because it is intended that they shall be prescribed for widely-differing ailments. But because two medicines are contrary in their effects, you cannot for that reason call one good and the other bad. Both are, in themselves good, but only when used as it is intended that they should be used, and when not so used, both are bad. Thus opium — a blessing of God when used to alleviate pain— has, when taken for other purposes, become the curse of humanity in China and throughout the civilized world. An elixir is a poison when unnecessarily administered.

So it is with all our faculties. Human actions have always the same results, which the exigencies of scene and occasion make good or evil.

The companionship of man and woman sanctioned by society as lawful wedlock, is good; but the same companionship under any other conditions is a wickedness which ranks, in the teaching of the Quran, second only to murder. Whatever is from God is for our good, to supply our needs, to turn our faculties and powers to good; and if, by our misuse of them, we turn to evil, that is our doing and our sin.

We come to this world with immaculate natures, capable of doing good and of soaring to the highest of the high; everything around us is designed to aid us in attaining the object for which we have been created. There is no doubt that we do stand sorely in need of knowledge — knowledge of our own selves and the powers that are latent in us, and knowledge of the Nature round about us, and if anything can be said to have wrought evil in the world, it is our ignorance. Nature is inexorable and cannot forgive those who do not respect her. Meddling with her laws brings havoc and disaster, but it is the meddling born of ignorance; for science has been enabled to read and understand the secrets of Nature, and to make of the inexorable tyrant, a submissive handmaid. All the fury of the elements is tamed to our command, and all that seemed evil and sinister therein has been shown to be but a manifestation of the Divine Beneficence. Different forms and forces of Nature may in relation to each other, be described as good and bad, because of the difference in their effects and tendencies; but, in the abstract, all are good, and are intended to do good. Cold and heat may, relatively be good or bad, as the case may be; but, separately, each is good in the performance of the functions prescribed for it. The laws of gravitation and repulsion may, similarly, be classed as good or bad according to circumstances, and yet it is these two forces which are mainly responsible for the harmonious working of Nature as a whole. Are not white corpuscles the foes of bodily health, and yet, at the same time, do we not owe our vitality to the constant struggle ceaselessly being waged within us by the white and the red germs? There are literally countless illustrations, drawn from everyday Nature, which force us to the conclusion that there is nothing coming from God which, when used in the proper way and at the proper time, is evil. It is the nonobservance of ordained limits which creates evil and engenders sin.

This is the exposition of good and evil which we read in the Quran, and it shows clearly enough that evil is of our own acquisition, and not a heritage. "Whatever good comes to you it is from God, whatever evil befalls you it is from yourself" (Quran, ch. 4. verse 79). Evil is not a God-made thing, but the fruit of human

actions or of omissions due to man's ignorance. Revelation is from God, to enlighten us as to the limits beyond which we must not go. God has made us capable of distinguishing between the right and the wrong use of everything created by Him. He has given us the knowledge, and if we choose to act in a manner contrary to that knowledge, we alone are responsible and we must suffer accordingly; for everything in Nature, including Man and the capacities of Man, is under the law. To obey brings good, to disobey, disaster. The logic is simple, but St. Paul failed to understand it, and the Church, through succeeding ages, has clung to his fallacy. To him, law appeared as a curse which brought sin into the world, redemption from which he found only in the blood of Jesus. Law does not create sin; it is the breach which gives birth to evil. Law is the way to achieve good, sin is its violation.

The Quranic language is too cogent to leave any doubt on the subject. All the Arabic words used in the text to correspond with, or to convey the significance of the English word "sin", mean transgression, or going beyond certain bounds. *Junah* literally means to be aside from the proper place; *Asa* to go beyond; *Jurm* to be cast aside; *Zamb* to be above the proper lines; *Ada* to transcend. All the words italicized here have been used by the Quran for sin, and their literal meanings serve to show the nature of sin under Quranic teaching, which is to go beyond certain limits. The word *Tauba,* which in the Quran stands for repentance, throws a still further light on the subject. It literally means to return. All human actions are virtues when man is within bounds. If he exceeds them, he is a sinner; but if he retraces his steps, he is showing repentance, in the Islamic sense of the word.

There is another aspect of the question which needs a few comments; and that is—our capacity to do wrong.

RELIGION AND FETISHISM

If we worship a thing, imaginary or real, in the belief that it will be productive of the greatest possible good to us in this life and in the hereafter, and that without any exertion on our part, we are doing pre-

cisely the same thing as the fetish worshippers of Central Africa, and it is not for us to laugh at them if they select an eggshell or a tin can as the object of their adoration.

No time or country has been without its fetish. People have worshiped elements and combinations of elements, with the same belief. Luminaries, rivers, trees, stones and animals have received from man the homage due only to the Most High in Heaven. Is not all this fetishism? If some people in India approach this thing or that with the same feeling of reverence or adoration as the African savage approaches an eggshell, reason fails to see any difference between African and Indian psychology. Science, however, has reduced these deities of the past, and made them slaves to us. They have been brought down from the throne of godhood to minister to our needs. Once they were our lords, but now they sit at our feet. But for all that, I fear, fetishism is ubiquitous still. It appears in different forms and shapes, in different times and climates. When once the clothing with which it was divinely vested by one generation, becomes sufficiently threadbare to disclose its nakedness, it appears in new garments, to demand respect from mankind. Just like an old Brahmin, who every day goes with fresh flowers to replace the faded wreaths with which he garlanded his idol yesterday, so man has worshiped his fetish, from an egg to God-in-man, with different sentiments and ideas.

If our faith in the sanctity or superhumanity of a certain man, or in a certain event in his life, is believed to effect a miraculous transformation in our morals, and make us the recipients of the choicest blessings of God — all this being only the imagination, with no reality in it — in what way are we better off than our fellow-beings in Central Africa? And if these premises are valid, am I not justified in concluding that all such religions of the world, including Christianity, as base human salvation in this life or hereafter upon dogmas unattended with actions, are only refined forms of fetishism? One may go further than that. Even the performance of the religious ceremonies known as divine worship, in the belief that our doing so is in itself sufficient for our uplifting, is only fetishism in its ultimate form.

The Quran says: "It is not righteousness that you turn your faces towards the East and the West, but righteousness is this, that one should believe in Allah and the last day and the book and the prophets, and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer and the beggars and for (the emancipation of) the captives, and keep up prayer and pay the poor rate; and the performance of their promise when they make a promise, and the patient in distress and affliction and in time of conflict — these are they who are true (to themselves) and these are they who guard (against evil)." Ch. 2 : 177.

To partake of the Lord's Supper for the purpose of commemorating the Last Passover observed by Jesus, is intelligible enough; but to call it the Sacrifice of the Mass, and to maintain that our partaking of it brings into our body the very flesh and blood of Jesus, represents a belief which can scarcely command an intelligent reverence. It is not by any means new. In every other Hindu temple in India we find a ceremony analogous to the Mass. The offerings made to Hindu idols, if partaken of by the worshiper, are believed to bring him nearer to the celestial bodies which those idols symbolize. As long as man will manage to keep his religion and his reason in two different watertight compartments of his mind, so long will fetishism appear in one form or another. Put all these dogmatized doctrines to the test of that God-given gift—which alone sets the man above the animal—I mean reason, and all your gods and deities will crumble down to dust, mere fetishes, stripped of all the graceful garments given to them by ignorance and credulity.

Things from God are complementary to each other. They may differ in some of their properties, but they work harmoniously. If religion is a gift from God, and our reason also, then any religion or faith which cannot be made consistent with that reason, is not religion from above, but only fetishism.

God does not stand in need of adoration from us. If our worship of Him is His pleasure, then is He a God of like passions with our-

selves; hence will arise anthropomorphic conceptions, and these are not a promising mold for morality.

If man, as they say, is the best handiwork of God, he must have been created to accomplish some grand object. Eating, drinking and the procreation of his species cannot be said to constitute a grand object. All the lower members of the animal kingdom are in this respect on a level with the lord of the universe. But there is something more than this in man—conscience, the ethical and the moral sense, spirituality and the soaring of the soul up to the holy precincts of the most High. If these potentialities in man do not become realities by pursuing this or that faith, such faiths are only diverse forms of fetishism, and not religion.

Islam comes to give a new object in religion — to make it the theory of life. It supplies man with rules which, when acted upon, convert his potentialities into actualities. Worship in Islam means complete submission to Divine Laws, and what Muslims do in their Mosques is an index to their minds. Their bowing and prostrating only show their willingness to lower and prostrate themselves to His Will, in order to work out that grand object for which humanity was created, to prepare and qualify themselves for further uplifting in the regions on the other side of the grave.

BIRTHS, DEATHS AND REBIRTHS OF DIVINITY

(IN LONDON MUSLIM HOUSE, 1918)

Man is a worshiping animal. He must have some object of adoration. From fetishism to man-worship, his hankering after the adored one has given birth to divinities in different garbs and colors. Even the Atheist has his idols. He worships his own hobbies and fads. Man's own desires become his divinities when his theology is defeated; his needs clothe them, his ideals invest them with divine attributes. Such man-made deities, indeed, constitute a true reflection of contemporary morals and ideals—crystallizing in themselves all that is noble and good in the thought of the day. Such deities, like ideal conceptions, seem for the moment to be eternal; but modifica-

tions, scarcely perceptible, are constantly at work, for as our circumstances change, so also do our needs and desires. New environments mean new ideals. The beautiful of yesterday becomes the commonplace of today and, perhaps, the downright hideous of tomorrow. That which once seemed divine, is divine no longer, and so the old god dies and the new god is born in the semblance of our new ideas. In the words of a Buddhist poet "The flowers of the garland he wore are withered; his robes of majesty are waxed old and faded; he falls from his high state and is reborn into a new life. Under a new name, man's own creature — a focus of new ideas reigns in his heart in the garb of a new divinity."

The Quran refers to this tendency in man in the following words "Have you seen him who takes his low desires for his god?" (ch. 25. v. 43). This shows how broad is the idea of polytheism in Islam. It condemns not only the worship of idols, but it equally condemns the indiscriminate following of one's desires. Many men who believe in worshiping one God, do, nevertheless bow before the greatest of their idols, their desires. In no other religion has the monotheistic idea been brought to such perfection.

The last two thousand years in Christendom have seen many a death and birth of the adored one. The divinity of Jesus has received different conceptions and interpretations from time to time, each embodying the popular ideas of the day. Thus are explained the manifold differences which mark the various mythological conceptions of God, for the world has never been without its mythology. Modernism itself is nothing else than benighted mythology, opportune enough to trim her course to every puff of doctrinal wind; quick, chameleon-like to suit its color to the changed surroundings of an ever-changing time. Opportunism became the habit of the Church, and her doctrinal changes — not all imperceptible, — have been continuous; but our days are days of wonders and marvels. Acceleration is the order of the time. The work of centuries becomes accomplished in a decade; days stand for years in the molding of human thought and ideas. Can such changes fail to influence the theology of the Church in the West?

I think not. We hear yet again the cries of death-agonies and birth-throes together. The God Who spoke from the Mount was again at Calvary in the days of the War. His robes as the Prince of Peace were fading; he was laid in the tomb, but the resurrection was not far off; the stone was removed and Jesus was seen in khaki in the trenches, with the spear of Mars in his hand instead of the olive branch. The God of Peace, who nominally ruled Christendom for centuries as the inspirer of love and meekness, did not suit the Western temperament of aggression, and had to die, and be re-born as the God of War.

The God who preached the Gospel of Peace, once uttered these words; "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whoever shall smite thee on the right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them that persecute you". They are simple words and have never received any but their strictly literal interpretation. Christians took a pride in being styled the lambs and sheep of Jesus. But circumstances have changed, and some of the shepherds, in cassock and surplice, headed by the Bishop of London, marched in procession to Hyde Park on the afternoon of June 9th, 1917. When they reached the Marble Arch, the Bishop of London in his address said: "All those passages in the New Testament which conscientious objectors quote, are misunderstood and misquoted...If we saw a blackguard ill-using a little child, should we stand still? No, we should deal with the blackguard speedily and vigorously. Smaller nations will fight for their rights, and stronger nations must assist in hauling the bully off the little nations of the world...We must drive the invaders out of the lands they have despoiled. If we had sat still and dared nothing, the women and children of Britain would have been treated as those in Belgium."

The Bishop of Chelmsford, in dedicating a motor ambulance for the use of the wounded soldiers at Ilford in the same month, said that the war was going on, for it would be a folly and a crime to put aside the sword, until the purpose for which we had drawn it had been secured. Could these words come from a worshiper of the One who

said "All those that take the sword shall perish by the sword?" I wonder, how long will the people of the West continue to change the garb of their God? The time must surely come when simple reason will force them to surrender the legacy of pagan days. Reason, in the end, will compel them to sit at the feet of Lord Mohammed, who was not God, but the true representative of the Mind on High. In their actions they have already begun to do so. The Bishop of Chelmsford, in his above-quoted utterance, had no choice but to give up the so-called gospel of peace, and voice the teachings of the Quran to meet contingencies for which the words of the Lord of Christianity have proved to be a dead-letter.

The Holy Quran says the following: "Why should ye not fight in the Path of Allah, and for the weak among men, women and children, who say, O our Lord, bring us forth from this city whose inhabitants are oppressors, give us a champion from Thy Presence, and give us from Thy Presence a defender." (Ch. 4. v. 75)

JESUS A FOLLOWER AND NOT A FOUNDER OF RELIGION

If our words and actions are the best index of our character and pretensions, and should, as such, be preferred to what others say or think of us, then I assert that the Lord of Christianity never claimed to be the teacher of a new dispensation, neither does the combined testimony of the four Evangelists make him so. He was a Jew like other Jews, and a Rabbi like other Rabbis. This is the only conclusion which an unbiased reader will gather from the Gospels.

When asked "What should I do in order to live?" he replied, "Fulfil the law." The question will come from every honest mind when awakened to the sense of duty, and the reply given by Jesus is the only true reply which could emanate from any and every prophet or teacher, the purpose of whose coming was to better humanity. "Fulfil the law" is the only solution of every problem—the only key to success in all our activities. If evil ensues from its breach, the observance of the law is the only remedy. This is as true of things

spiritual and moral as it is of things physical. Headache, caused by disregard of hygienic laws, was never cured by any physician, by breaking his own head to atone for the breach. We take medicine to aid nature in repairing the injury caused by breaking laws of health. If the breaking of the head, as I suggest, can neither cure the patient nor help the constitution, the Crucifixion cannot atone for past sins, and belief in it cannot guarantee future sinlessness, for the soul-grown sin is the breach of the law. It was not Jesus who taught those semi-logical niceties of spirituality which we read in the fifth and sixth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans. Perhaps the antecedents and environment of St. Paul were his justification when he wrote the Epistle. Rejected by his own people, he went to the Gentiles who could not be reconciled to the strict Jewish legalism. The apostle could not but declare the law a curse and deny its necessity. To justify his departure from the religion of Jesus, his ingenuity came to help him, and he devised the doctrine of atonement.

BREACH OF SABBATH BY JESUS NO SIGN OF DIVINITY

Jesus never departed from the strict observance of the Mosaic law. He always adhered to Jewish ordinances; and the sole breaches, if such they can be called, are contained in only two recorded incidents of his life, and these do but show that he could in case of necessity, dispense with the then prevalent Judaic customs. Besides, neither is of real importance. His permission to pluck the ears of corn on the Sabbath, and his neglect of the custom of washing of hands before meals, were infringements, not of the law, but of Rabbinical custom. By committing the breach he was as much the "Lord of the Sabbath" as any other law-abiding Rabbi of the time could have been, who cared to discriminate between the law and custom.

Drastic measures were needed to awaken a race enveloped in ceremonial, and neglectful of the law. He wanted them to follow the latter and, when necessary, reject the former. He could not do better than violate one of their received practices, seeing that he could not hope to reclaim his tribe from the slavery of convention if he did not first demonstrate its needlessness. On the one hand he broke the

Sabbath, but on the other, he would say that he had not come to destroy the law; thus teaching the custom-ridden people to distinguish between the law and the ceremonial. The observance of the Sabbath, under Rabbinical directions, was unnatural and could not be a divine law. To point out the error, Jesus broke it. He simply wished to indicate that the institution had been ordained in the Commandments to serve mankind, by giving them rest after six day's work; therefore he very rightly said that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath. By breaking the Sabbath he taught a wholesome lesson, which has, however, been ignored by Christendom and the Church, who seem to take it as a sign of divine authority, allowable only in his case. They have continued in their slavish observance of the Sabbath for two thousand years, till the last Great War came to open their eyes. Then this piece of divine right, claimed exclusively for Jesus by the Church, crumbled to pieces before the needs of the day. Every good Christian went to sow and pluck the ears of corn on the Sabbath, which became more honored in the breach than in the observance.

CHAPTER 6.

DARWIN AND EVOLUTION

Darwinism is on the wane. No one cares to trace his origin to ape ancestry. Even physically, there are many gaps to fill between man and monkey. The research of the last fifty years could not find out "the missing link" between man and orangutan.

That imaginary thing is a non-entity, and will remain, so ever. The genesis of man as given in the first book of the Bible could not satisfy Darwin. No one with an intelligent head on his shoulders can satisfy himself with the account given in the Bible. But that is no reason why we should swallow the pill prepared by Darwin. His theory, no doubt, has plausibility, and could possibly be accepted, if man was only flesh and bone. His charts may disclose some resemblance between the human skeleton and the physical frame of a monkey; but what about the consciousness of the two entities? The gulf between human and ape-consciousness is wide enough to disprove the Darwinian theory. His naked eye even with the help of science could not see that vast difference between human brain-cells and ape brain-congeries which the two consciousnesses disclose. The frame of the human body, apparently, may show a little improvement on the physical constitution of the monkey, but there is no comparison worth the name between the human mind and that of the most perfect in the ape category.

HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS

Man is the miniature of the Universe. The Quran teaches us so. Many among the subsequent philosophies support this Quranic view. Every atom in nature finds room in the human frame. I may go further and say that every organism has its representative in the human constitution. This theory specially holds good as far as human con-

sciousness goes. Every animal has special traits in his consciousness: if consciousness is only the sum total of certain passions, hankerings, and appetites differently observable in different animals, the theory of Darwin falls to the ground when the consciousness of the various animals is examined. The consciousness of a cat is quite different from that of a pig. The lustful, dirty and unclean habits of the animal—the flesh of which makes a delicious dish to some tastes, carrying along with it the ways of the animal to its eaters—cannot be observed in the tidy, manner of a cat. It would be an interesting pursuit to study the manners of different animals, as in it lies the study of their consciousness, but the diversion would be a digression from my subject. Suffice it to say that there is a big contrast in the animal consciousness of different categories. While human consciousness marks a new departure in this respect, it collects within itself every animal consciousness. Nature collocates the minds of every other animal in the human mind, cat and dog, wolf and lion, pig and horse, serpent and crocodile; in short, wherever there is the exhibition of consciousness in animal lives, it finds its place in human consciousness. Human consciousness, so to say, is cosmic-consciousness.

If such is the case, and man cannot be the descendant of an ape, even a thousand generations removed, what are we to say of the one or two missing links suggested by Darwin, between man and ape. If the monkey was our ancestor, his mind should have collocated at least the minds of a hundred other animals, as our mind represents millions of minds. Even on the basis of our physical constitution, Darwin was not a true prophet. His charts showing the skeletons of different animals, may excite admiration in a few superficial minds but if mentality is the outcome of the physical frame, the variety in mentality observable in various categories of animals, necessitates variety of physical frame. Hence, different species in the animal kingdom cannot be in lineal descent from each other. There may be apparent kinship in different physical frames to the extent of deceiving the human eye—and Darwin was unfortunately misled by it—but really there exists no kindredness, even between the body-fabric of the different species of animals.

ORIGIN OF SPECIES

It is difficult to locate the origin of species, but one thing is certain. Species is not the outgrowth of natural selection, as suggested by Darwin. In their classification you may arrange divisions and subdivisions under certain genera, but in the light of what has recently come within scientific ken, any species can be traced, for its origin, to the world of atoms. Ethereal specks are no sooner converted into electronic complex, than they travel with mathematical precision, on prescribed lines, to reach their goal in some particular organism. In various stages of development they may undergo different specializations or collocations, but they never leave the prescribed course. They seem to know it; like the bee, they may travel hundreds of miles without making transgression from the route already chalked out for them. They know the very organism they are going to become a component of, and they cannot mistake it for another. If this can be accepted as a scientific truth, it destroys the very fabric of Darwinism, and science has only come to support what the Quran said some thirteen hundred years ago:

> "Rubbu-nallazi a'ata kulla shai-in khalqahu thumma hada." My creator has given to every particular thing its particular form, measure, and mode of its creation. He prescribed a course for it, and gave guidance to it.

CHAPTER 7.

ARABIC, THE ONLY VEHICLE OF THE DIVINE MIND

Human language springs from articulate sounds; articulate sounds when, by the tacit consent of society invested with meaning, become words; and words are the vehicle of thought for conveying the mind of a speaker to his hearers. Often their function passes beyond the sphere of place and time in which they were first uttered. They become a storehouse of ideas for others, and the thoughts of one generation pass by their means to them that come after, when the words of the speakers are deemed to be good. In this way language has brought us the treasures of past wisdom and, but for language, we should have been the losers of the ancient philosophies.

But the languages of the world, almost without exception, suffer from the vicissitudes of time. Words change in form and meaning as man's mental outlook changes from generation to generation. The language of a writer, however eloquent to express his mind to the people of his own time, will become, with the passing of the years, archaic in form, or in meaning, or in both. Old books, therefore, not being in popular language, are shelved and go gradually to oblivion, if they fail to attract the readers of the day; and even then it is the translation and not the original that is read. Moreover the same fate awaits the translation. Yet a few centuries, and the translation itself must be translated, because the language of the first translation has become out of date and unintelligible. And a translation, however conscientious, can never be the faithful representative of the original; hence it is no matter for surprise if the mind and meaning of the writers of old have, through successive and somewhat excessive translation, become absolutely obscure to the readers of a thousand years afterwards.

Herein is explained both the disappearance of the original texts of many sacred scriptures, and the human adulteration that has crept into their respective translations. That the Old and New Testaments alike have suffered thus, each in its degree, is generally admitted. On the other hand, however, I have elsewhere cited the case of the Vedas where, though the original language may have been preserved, its significance is today hidden beyond all hope.

Such being the circumstances, no one professing those faiths can well claim at the present time to be in true possession of the Divine Intent — so far as it has been vouchsafed to man — even if in ancient time that Intent had been revealed to his forefathers.

But if religion has for its purpose the revealing of the Will of the Most High to His people, and if that revelation has at any time become dimmed or lost, He will not surely leave His people to grope helplessly in the dark for ever.

"The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light," not once only in the world's long history but often, just so often as the light of former revelation, flickering, has seemed upon the point of extinction.

DIFFERENT RELIGIONS OF DIFFERENT PEOPLES

History has seen periods in which the different branches of humanity had become separated from each other by natural or artificial barriers, with no means of mutual communication and no vehicles for the transmission of the wisdom, philosophy or religion of the one race to the other; but if religion from God came to enlighten men as to His ways, then surely every nation was entitled to have a religion from God, of its own. It had it, as we read in the Quran. All these religions did and do converge on a common basic principle; the difference being only in matters immaterial, and that on account of local causes; and if they seem to differ at present in some of their teachings, it is on account of the changes their respective languages have undergone.

Two or three hundred years passed after the advent of Jesus, before the world began to show signs of moving towards an ultimate unity. To this end, many factors had long been at work, and the universal tendency needed above all things unity in creed and faith, because religion had always proved to be the most efficacious means of welding conflicting elements into one harmonious whole. Religion is the lever of the machinery of Brotherhood; and if the Divine Intent had been to send one religion for the entire human race, as the last word from Him, would not His whole purpose have been thwarted and made of none effect, if God had revealed His mind in a language that was liable to change?

Of all the languages of the earth, Arabic is the most conservative and the Arabic of the Hedjaz has always remained above corruption, preserving in its words their original purity both of form and meaning.

Let us suppose then, for the sake of argument, that the Most High had, at the coming of Islam, condescended to take counsel with the advocates of all existing different religions, for the purpose of selecting for His final message a vehicle which should be capable of conveying to coming generations to the end of time, the full true and perfect expression of His will, precisely as it came from Him. Would not Arabic the unchanging, have been commended by all as the most fitted to become the medium of the unchanging Word of God? Of all the languages then spoken, Arabic alone is living now. Go to the Hedjaz, as I did, and there you will find the language of the Quran on the lips of every child. It is to this change-tendency in language that we owe the loss of much that would have given us light and guidance in our understanding of religion. Many are the prophets whose life-stories would have shone as beacons to man's footsteps in the darkness, had we possessed the genuine records of them. It is our misfortune that the lives of these great seekers after the Mind of God have become shrouded in oblivion for this very reason, and the most closely shrouded of them all is the life of Jesus, of which little is known.

Ill-advised Christian writers — and an average example of them may be found in Dr. Zwemer of the so-called "Muslim World" — are wont to harp on a comparison between Jesus and Mohammed. Invidious comparisons can serve no useful purpose, and we, as Muslims, are enjoined by the Quran to refrain from making distinctions between prophet and prophet. To disillusion such over-zealous missioners, it is but necessary to remind them of the unauthentic character of the synoptic records, and to point out that there can be no comparison between myth and history. His life for the first thirty years is enveloped in a cloud of mystery, and of the remaining three, the accounts are meager in the extreme. Delete the miracles from the Gospel narrative, and the record of events will barely fill half a dozen pages. What light can such a life hold for the world of today? When we turn to the sources of the record, our hopes sink lower — for those who related the events of that life were uneducated men, mostly of the peasant class—who, as such, by reason of their limitations were perforce the narrators less of actualities than of their own impressions — and we should not expect a clearer or more truthful replica from those impressions, in their turn, when in contact with the simple minds of fishermen and country folk. It is no matter for surprise that these unsophisticated disciples of Jesus should be interested in hearing tales of strange events and miracle stories, rather in looking for a message of light and guidance for the generations yet to come.

Again, parallels may be found in the Mishna and Philo, besides the Talmud and other Judaic writings, to much of what we read in the Sermon on the Mount, while certain of the parables extolled by Christian writers are also found in Buddhist literature which came into existence some two centuries before the birth of Jesus. In the face of meager and unauthenticated records such as these, there can be no comparison between Mohammed and Jesus. But to return, words are the vehicles which convey our minds to the minds of others. Revealed words are the vehicles of God's mind to us. If the words chosen by God, long centuries ago, to reveal His Will to man have, in the course of ages, become corrupted and lost the meanings

they originally had, then the Divine Will is no longer revealed through them; and if, for reasons known to God, it had become necessary to give to the world one final word, after Jesus, would He not select as the last medium of His Will, the language of Hedjaz, which, alone of all languages, He has ordained to be immune from time and change.

CHAPTER 8.

REVELATION OF THE QURAN A NECESSITY THE BIBLE AND OTHER SACRED BOOKS

If word came from God from time to time for human guidance in olden days, Divine providence for our spiritual growth would be wanting in consistency and universality, if its message reached us in an adulterated condition. That almost all the books, passing as revealed, excepting the Quran, are not free from human interpolation is a truth admitted even by the adherents of those books. The books of the Old and New Testaments have now been declared, even by ecclesiastical authority, to be unauthentic in many places. Solomon never wrote the books known by his name, nor was Moses the author of the Pentateuch, and the same is the case, more or less, with every other book in the Bible. But it is said that these holy books are partially genuine. How to sift right from wrong is another difficulty. We possess no real means of doing it; all ingenuity and labor, till now, has been a mere waste. We believe the Bible a partial fabrication, yet millions of people accept it as the Word of God, in its entirety.

How inconsistent is the human mind! We prefer to have things in their natural form, where everyday eating and drinking are concerned. We will not quench our thirst with the water taken from a jar in which some one has put his hand by mistake. Articles of food prepared under a process dispensing with the touch of human hands, will always command a market. We are thus scrupulous in our physical diet, but we lack the same prudence in matters affecting our spiritual sustenance. If a document partially admitted to be forged, is not acceptable in evidence in any court of justice, why should the Bible command our respect as the Word of God, if a considerable portion of it is unauthenticated?

Again, Divine providence becomes defective if God closes the door of revelation to humanity after a certain period in human history. If the Divine economy deemed revelation necessary for human uplifting, the need has surely not come to an end. We are the same people as our ancestors were, with the same deficiencies and the same limitations. Our forefathers had no superior claims on His providential dispensation. We are as much His children as those who lived in ages gone by. If the revelation of His Will was a necessity to frame the spiritual fabric in ancient days, the need is the same in our days. A just and impartial God should, surely, do one of two things; either He should preserve His Word, revealed before, in its entirety and put it, in its original purity, into our hands, or He should replace it with a new Revelation, in case the former shall have become polluted by human touch. Do we not observe the same phenomenon in the whole world around us, as far as His physical dispensation is concerned? There are certain things in Nature, which are above all human interference, and therefore free from pollution. Such are the sun, the moon, the solar system generally, and very many other things in space which, being free from human possession, have always remained in their required shape, and need no substitution in their service to humanity. But things that lose their purity and become impaired in their usefulness are replaced from time to time by a new supply. We cannot live without water, if fresh water means life to us. It loses its utility when spoiled with earthy matter, and we cannot use sea-water for irrigation purposes. Fresh supplies of water come every year from heaven to give life to the whole earth, therefore, thus argues the Quran, when it shows the necessity of its revelation to this world: "And We have sent this book to you in order to remove the differences into which these people have fallen, and it is a blessing and a guidance for those who believe; and Allah sends down rain from heaven and gives life by it to the dead earth" (The Quran, chapter "The Bee"). Want of rain even for one year will kill all vital forces of the earth. Drought means death. Any amount of water in the ocean or in lakes becomes of little use to us, if the water does not come from the heavens. If water is the life-giving principle

for physical nature, then is revelation most assuredly life to the soul. If God never fails to send water from heaven when its former supply has failed or become vitiated, how can He sit silent when the Word itself that came from Him in bygone days is no more heard, or has become corrupt? Here is a logic clear enough to the average mind, yet the luminaries of the Church in the West do not seem to have grasped it. They are, on the one hand, conscientious enough to admit the unauthenticated nature of the Bible, but on the other hand, they will not admit the necessity for any revelation subsequent to the ministry of Jesus — finding full satisfaction in the theory of a new dispensation — the grace of "the blood." This has relieved them of any need for Divine guidance.

Guidance of conduct in every sphere of human activity they do need, and they admit it; but in matters religious and spiritual it is otherwise. Here they rely instead on some sort of miraculous transformation which, they hold, is wrought in them by the simple fact of their belief in the blood of Jesus.

Man was given the law, so runs the argument of the Church, following in the footsteps of St. Paul; but inasmuch as it was not in man's power to obey it, the law became a curse to humanity. The Old Covenant of "law and obedience" did not work well, argues the Church; God had failed in His experiment; and so, after some four thousand years, He was pleased to grant us a new Dispensation which was revealed in the Cross, and relieved man from his obligation to observe the law — a principle absurd on the face of it, especially in the light of daily experience.

We cannot afford to dispense with the observance of law in any phase of our life. Our very existence depends on the working of certain laws. But for the law, our life and property cannot be safe from danger. The very existence of the whole universe depends upon the law of the universe being strictly observed by every component of the universe. Propriety of conduct means consistency with the law, and misbehavior means disrespect of the law. Disease is only a corollary to the breach of hygienic laws, and immorality a violation

of the law of society. In short, regard for law is the lever on which the machinery of all civilization and progress is working, and one fails to appreciate that psychology of mind in certain people, which bows down to the law in everything except religion.

The theory of the New Dispensation of Blood is, again, an unjustifiable stigma on the universality of Divine Providence. If belief in the blood was the sole efficacious means of human salvation, why were not the generations before Jesus given the benefit of this blessing? If the religion of law and obedience was only a curse to humanity, as St. Paul says, why was the ancestry of Jesus, and with it the whole world saddled with that evil? Again, the greater part of the world remained ignorant of this new epiphany for centuries. It was not until the last century that most of the world came to know of the Gospel which has wrongly been fathered on Jesus. Ought not the New Dispensation to have been universal, if it came from the Universal Father?

Again, one fails to understand the reason for choosing a particular time in the history of man for this revelation. To say that God wanted to give a trial to the Old Covenant is, surely, a gross insult to His Omniscience. He must have known from the very beginning that His machinery of the law for human betterment would be a failure, and if the Sacred Carpenter from Galilee had indeed, to make and bear the Cross for the salvation of humanity, the event of the Crucifixion should have taken place either immediately after the commission of sin by our first parents, or on the last Day of Judgment. That God created man under a certain covenant which the latter violated, whereupon God repented and saw the solution in atonement, are theories well enough for children in the nurseries, but to present them to cultured minds is simply an insult to intelligence.

The book of Islam, in justification of its revelation, offers us a logic both simple and true. It refers us to the universal laws of Providence which have been working since the creation of the Universe. Whatever is needed for the existence of man, and the provision of which is not within his reach, comes directly from God; and

if the old becomes extinct, or is rendered unworthy of use through corruption, the new comes from above to meet the need. Divine Revelation came to guide humanity in every time and clime, and if man lost it or polluted it, God sent it anew. We Muslims do believe that every nation has been blessed with this message of guidance from God, every class of the human race has had its prophet and every country its guide; they left the Word of God with their followers, who through various causes could not keep their sacred books in their original purity, and so God was pleased to send the revelation of the Quran, the genuineness of which has been admitted on all hands. Friends and foes alike accept the Quranic text as pure, as it came from the sacred lips of the Prophet Mohammed, but, all other revelations have lost their genuineness, The Quran came at a time when all those natural or artificial barriers which separated one nation from another some two thousand years before, had been to a great extent removed, while efficient means of communication have since made the whole world as one nation for intellectual and spiritual culture. The necessity of giving a separate revelation to each nation exists no more. One Book may act as a light to the whole world.

THE VEDAS

Now a few words as to the Vedas—The Sacred Book of India. Under the teaching of the Quran, a Muslim need not disbelieve in its Divine origin. "Every nation was given a prophet," and "There is no race which had not its Warner from God" — this is the teaching of the Quran. And a Muslim must believe that India had its own prophets in the person of the Vedic Rishis; Rama Chandra, Buddha and Krishna belonging to the same category. But the question is, as to the genuineness and universal utility of the holy writs that came from these sages in India. Very little has been said against the genuineness of the Vedas, except the supposed assertion of Valmiki that the book is not complete and is missing in many "sutras." The remark seems to be correct. Keeping all human needs in view the Vedas in their present form are not sufficient guide, and even what we have in our hands is of no great importance as far as its useful-

ness to humanity in general goes. It possibly contains inestimable treasures, but they are sealed to man. The book is written in language which has ceased to be our popular tongue for thousands of years. People differ in its interpretation. Various schools of thought, absolutely contrary in their tenets and doctrine, claim to receive their inspiration from the same book. They cherish beliefs poles apart from each other, and yet they contrive to fortify these contradictions by verses from the Vedas. How this can be done is simply a mystery. The only possible explanation lies in the difficulty which we encounter in appreciating the true meanings of the Vedas — a difficulty which is unsurmountable; neither grammar nor lexicon can help us. The water that came from the heavens themselves thousands of years ago to the Himalayan plains for the fertility of the human mind, may possibly have remained unpolluted from earthly matter, yet would seem to have sunk into the recesses of the Himalayas too deep for human reach. Should the descendants of the Rishis spend their ingenuity and time in removing mountain after mountain to avail that elixir, or should they believe in the Divine universal Providence, and accept the water of life in the shape of the Quran, which was given to humanity at a time when past revelations had become either corrupt or, like the Vedas, of little use for the purpose for which they have been sent. The Quran does not claim to bring a new religion. It gives the same pristine religion of law and obedience, revealed to every nation from above. It contains all those truths which were given in the ancient books. "Scriptures purified contain mighty truths." In this pithy sentence, the Quran claims to contain all the truths given in former days but since adulterated through human hands. It is, in short, the last book of the Revelation of God, sent to restore these others to their original purity, and in some cases to explain anew Divine Truths which had, through antiquity of language, as in the case of the Vedas, become unintelligible.

CHAPTER 9.

THE PROBLEM FOR A FREE THOUGHT SOCIALIST

The equal distribution of a nation's wealth among its various units is an ideal proposition; but to work it out is nothing short of an impossibility. All State measures to achieve it would discredit the machinery of the Government, encourage laziness and kill individual exertion without which there can be no increase of wealth. On the other hand, there is a large proportion of mankind that cannot be saved from the iron grip of poverty, unless some effort is made to make wealth accessible in some degree to every person.

God is impartial in the dispensation of His bounties; His blessings fall equally on every creature; His ministers of nature serve every unit of His creation; He makes no distinction between man and man. In short, there is absolutely equal distribution of His wealth among all the members of mankind. If Communism is the only salvation from poverty, it cannot be achieved by the killing of Individualism, seeing that Individualism is in itself the best means and the most efficacious incentive to the production of wealth. These two ends, set poles apart, can only meet if man elects to follow the broad Divine Law alluded to above.

God's gifts come to us without our deserving them. We cannot live for a minute if an atom in the universe becomes eliminated; and the blessings of life are in no sense the reward of any action on our part. Follow this one attribute of God which the Quran discloses to us in its very beginning: *Rahman* — the compassionate God whose beneficence reaches everyone without any merit or dessert—and the whole problem of human misery is solved. Let those people who know how to utilize God's gifts to their best advantage, give the proceeds of their labor as a gift to others. If riches and wealth, in all

their forms, are simply the conversion of various things in nature to some purpose profitable to mankind, and if those who know the way of doing so become richer than others, are they not the most indebted to God? All their skill would be of no avail if no material created by the hand of God was already existing to be worked upon. A man needs simply to compare his own labor with the Divine labor that has supplied him with the raw material, to realize actually where he stands.

Truly speaking, human labor plays an infinitesimal part in comparison with the Divine labor by which that same human labor was brought into being. How shall recompense be made to the Great Benefactor for all the riches which the wealthiest man in the world possesses? The last message from Allah suggests an answer:—

> Righteousness is this, that one should believe in Allah . . . and give away wealth out of love for Him to the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarers and the beggars and for the emancipation of the captives.
>
> — The Quran 2 : 177.

I invite the attention of the Socialist and the Atheist to these lines. Can he suggest to us a better method of working out the noble objects and aims which he sums up in the word Socialism? Try what other course he will, he will see only failure. To kill Individualism is to kill the Ego—a suicidal step—to destroy human activities and to put an end to all exertions which lead to true civilization.

CHAPTER 10.

CINEMA FILMS DOING WHAT THE RELIGION AND CIVILIZATION IN THE WEST HAVE FAILED TO DO

Parents in indigence and sons in affluence exist side by side in the West—a shocking sight to an Eastern eye! The men of the West talk big of Socialistic ideas and world-regeneration, but they are lacking in the primal element of well-doing, filial piety, and do not know how to do good to their own kith and kin. They speak of democracy, and yet, when they rise in the world, they feel ashamed of their humble origin, if by any chance they own to it. If birth or inherited wealth find no special favor in the eyes of democracy, a self-made man should surely feel proud of his birth in penury. To be a son of man was man's proudest boast in the judgment of Caliph Omar, himself the first and most practical expounder of democracy in the world's history. The plant of Democracy can only germinate and reach its full growth, in such lands where the efforts of persons of lowly birth to achieve rank and distinction are not only encouraged but respected. But if we are ashamed of our birth, how can we make the thing we speak of a reality?

The civilization of a nation is hardly enviable, if its members do not fulfil their obligation to their own parents. We are no better than other animals, if self-indulgence is to consume all the proceeds of our labor. If the best capital wherewith to start life is the healthy condition of our joints and limbs, and a wholesome upbringing in our early life, do we not owe most of our wealth and opulence to our own parents? But we cannot expect to find any such sense of obligation in minds that have been molded by materialistic culture.

Unfortunately, Religion in the West has done very little in this respect. One must not, however, expect better things from the influ-

ence of a creed that tends to weaken man's sense of responsibility, by teaching him to believe that his sins have become cleansed by his acceptance of certain dogmas. Certainly the Fifth Commandment runs thus:—

> Honor thy father and thy mother: that thy days may be long in the land which the Lord thy God giveth thee.

But the reason assigned as an inducement to fulfil the Commandment would not appeal to the modern mind; and, unfortunately, there is but little further illumination on the subject in the whole Biblical record. The same Commandment has, it is true, from time to time been quoted[1] and referred to with amplifications. Yet it seems to have failed altogether to create a temperament conducive to filial piety. Cinema films, however, have come to save the situation. In forcible colors they depict the heartlessness towards their parents of children who, from humble origins, have risen to rank and prosperity. "A nurse or a gardener in his father's house," is the usual introduction which the parents of such a "swell" may expect to receive should they chance to inflict their unwelcome presence on the son in the company of his friends. Such heart-rending scenes, which are a common occurrence in the West, are very rare in the East, more especially in Muslim countries; and the reason is obvious, for those who receive the inspiration of their life from a book like the Quran have no choice in the matter. The Book of God not only makes filial piety a duty next only to our duty to God, but brings the truth home to the minds of its votaries in natural colors and with compelling effects, only partially attained in the West by the pen of the film-writer, coming belatedly to the aid of a religion that has failed.

In chapter 17 the Book says:—

> And your Lord has commanded that you shall not serve (any) but Him, and goodness to your parents. If either or both

1. Lev. 19. 3; Deut. 5. 16; Matt. 15. 4 and 19. 19; Mark 7. 10 and 10. 19; Luke 18. 20; Eph. 6. 2.

of them reach old age with you, say not to them (so much as) "Ugh" nor chide them, and speak to them a generous word.

And make yourself submissively gentle to them with compassion, and say: O my Lord! have compassion on them, as they brought me up (when I was) little. — The Holy Quran, 17 : 23,24.

The screen and the stage, even at the highest stretch of an author's imagination, cannot give that conception of a dutiful mind to the common theater-goer, which the reader of the following lines is sure to achieve, if he approaches them in a religious spirit:—

Bequest is prescribed for you when death approaches one of you, if he leaves behind wealth, for parents and near relatives, according to usage, a duty (incumbent) upon those who guard (against evil).—The Holy Quran, 2 : 80.

The parents of a Muslim receive a share in the wealth left by him on his death.

"Be good to the parents and to the near of kin" (4 : 36) is a repeated theme in the Quran, so much so that the parents have been declared to be the first deserving recipients of a son's charity.

They ask you as to what they should spend. Say: Whatever wealth you spend, it is for the parents and the near of kin and the orphans and the needy and the wayfarer, and whatever good you do, Allah surely knows it.

— The Holy Quran, 2 : 215.

We need not emphasize too much the need of a Revelation from God, like that of the Quran, in the presence of other holy scriptures, including the Bible. Very little, however, do we find in all the other sacred books on this subject. The repeated chorus of "Honor thy father and mother" in the Bible has failed to achieve the desired results. The Prophet Muhammad (Peace be upon him!) was an orphan; his parents died when he was a child. He had no mother to whom he could show his devout fulfillment of these Quranic injunc-

tions. Yet to his nurse, Halima, he behaved as the Quran desired him to do, in all respects as though she had been his own mother. When he was Lord and Conqueror of Arabia, and she was brought before him in chains with other war captives from the tribe to which she belonged, they had not seen each other for scores of years, yet his eyes could not fail to recognize his old nurse. With tears of joy he goes to her, and, as a most dutiful son, he takes off his own mantle from his shoulders; he spreads it on the floor, and invites her to be seated. Nor could he show his filial spirit in a better way than by liberating all her fellow-prisoners along with her. Could there be a more practical illustration of the Quranic teaching and spirit? If example is better than precept, the proverb never received such testimony in the case of any other prophet in the history of the world. Jesus did remind his followers of the Fifth Commandment, it is true; but Mary, we remark with reluctance, had a different treatment.

CHAPTER 11.

THE LANGUAGE FOR RELIGION— ARABIC WORDS AND THEOLOGY

If articulated sounds, by which I mean the words which are component parts of language, are intended primarily to convey the mind of a speaker to his hearers, such a purpose was never so well served as by Arabic. Arabic words are extraordinarily eloquent and rich in significance. Their meanings are, as often as not, self-evident, as one or two illustrations, taken almost haphazard, will show. *Kitab,* for example, is the Arabic word for *book.* The word has got *kataba* as its root, which means "to write," "to collect," "to sew," to "close," so if we had no notion of what the word: *kitab* meant, yet the several meanings of the root word will show that something written, then collected, stitched and bound will make a book. In other languages the equivalent words have nothing of this peculiar and comprehensive idea—the sense of logical development, we might call it.

Again, *bait* is an Arabic word for the English *house.* As a verb, it means "to spend the night," "to marry," "to brood over a design." We may pass the daytime wherever we like, but we are at home for the night if it is spent in the house. Moreover, marriage needs a house, and it is thus that almost all Arabic words may be said to speak for themselves. Such is not the case in non-Arabic languages. Words in them are dumb things, possessing for the most part no meaning beyond that which society chooses to give them. The Arabs, after all, are not presumptuous if they call their language Arabia, which means speaking or eloquent, and call all other non-Arabic languages Ajmi, which means dumb.

The words of other languages are not so rich in significance. They have received the meanings they bear, but in themselves have

nothing to show as to why they were chosen to bear it; and it is for this reason that I boldly assert of Arabic that it is the only language which may claim to be the language for religion.

Some time ago I gave a talk in this subject though from a slightly different point of view, in Singapore. There is scarcely a language in the world that is not subject to incessant change. Words undergo change both in meaning and form, and after a few centuries assume what seem to be new meanings. So a word used by a founder of a religion to convey a certain meaning, in his mind at the time, will not bring his mind to us today if that word has, in the lapse of centuries, undergone such a change and assumed such a new meaning; while we possess no contemporary lexicon, from which we may glean what the speaker really intended to say. Vedic literature is the best illustration of this difficulty. The language is, to all intents and purposes, a dead language. We possess no lexicon prepared in the Vedic Age, or prepared subsequently, and giving to Vedic words the meaning they had in the Vedic Age. It is therefore not surprising if the Vedic text, though revealed for the purpose of teaching one, has become responsible for a hundred and one religions, each distinct from the other in tenets and beliefs.

It is not certain which language was spoken by Jesus. Some say it was Aramaic, others make it Greek, though I am inclined to think it was some Hebrew dialect, as his last words seem to show. In any case, whatever the language He may have used as teacher, it could not convey His actual mind to us, even had the words themselves remained unchanged; the language was constantly in a process of change. It is an admitted fact that no language which was ever used by any teacher or prophet is in existence today.

The Arabic of the Hedjaz, however, the language in which the Quran was revealed, is the one and only exception to this otherwise universal rule of change. Moreover, as lexicons of Arabic were written by the generation immediately following on that of the Prophet himself, we are in possession of the meaning of every word used in

the Quran, or by Muhammad himself in his sayings—the identical and precise meaning which it received in his own days.

But in today's talk, I am speaking of Arabic from another standpoint, on which is based its claim to be regarded as the "Language of Religion."

It is the function of religion to teach certain truths which are embodied in certain concepts, which in popular language are called "beliefs and tenets of religion." While in other religions it is necessary to study sacred literature and the commentaries thereon, or to sit at the feet of scholars and teachers in order to appreciate tenets and truths of a particular faith, in the case of Islam, the religion taught by the Quran and Muhammad, you have only to study the meaning of the word used by the book, and prophet. Every religion, for example, speaks of some future bliss in the life after death, awaiting those who do righteous deeds. Heaven is the English word and *Jannat* is the Arabic equivalent. While in order to arrive at the specific Christian signification of the word one has to study the Bible, or the works of some Christian divine; the etymological meaning of the Arabic word gives us at once a clear idea of the Muslim Heaven, without reference to the Quran or any Muslim theologian. The rest is a matter of detail, which can be studied in Muslim literature, but even this we read and interpret, subject always to the etymological meaning of the word itself. In other words, you can understand Islam, its teachings and its truths simply by studying certain words used by the Quran to convey those truths. Now I take them one by one.

MUSLIM CONCEPTION AS TO CREATION

We believe the universe to be a created thing and not eternal. The Arabic word for universe, or world, is *Kaun,* which literally means *a thing created* and not eternal. It also means a thing which came into existence under the order of *Be*—to say. Someone said "Be" and it "became," referring to the Muslim belief that the Creator was first, and the universe came into existence at His command.

The strongest reason which has been advanced by Theists, to prove the existence of God, is the purposeful nature of the whole universe, wherein everything has got some use, and serves some ascertained need, thus showing design, and consequently inferring the Designer, the Creator. In other words, every constituent of the universe is a thing needed, and therefore desired.

The whole reasoning hinges upon the assumption that everything in Nature is needed and desired. The Arabic word for "thing" is *shai,* the root of which means "to wish," or "to desire." *Shai,* therefore, etymologically, means a thing needed, desired and wished for.

Again, the Arabic word for the universe is *Alam,* the root of which means "to know," or "knowledge." It is clear that all human knowledge is concerned with the universe, i.e. *Alam* is the object of knowledge. All our sciences consist of the knowledge of those laws under which the different constituent parts of the universe are working. Knowledge implies law. Thus the Arabic word for universe implies knowledge and law. Think upon these three Arabic words used in the Quran to mean the universe: *Kaun,* a thing created and coming into existence at a definite command, *Shai* (a constituent of the universe) meaning a thing needed and desired, *Alam* (universe) to which all our knowledge belongs, and you understand the Muslim belief as to the emanation of the universe—that is to say, that it is a created thing, created by someone to serve a certain purpose, that it is the source of all human knowledge, and that everything in it works under laws. In these three words you have the best of weapons, as I said before, wherewith to meet Atheism.

The word used in the Quran for the Deity, surpasses in its beauty and excellence all equivalents in any other tongue. Allah, in the Quran, stands for God. Allah, according to the best supported opinions, is a proper name applied to "the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself," comprising all the attributes of perfection. The word Allah is not applied to any being except the only true God; and it comprises all the excellent names; and the Arabs, moreover, never gave the name Allah to any of their numerous idols. In this respect

it has no equivalent in any other language, and it may be for this very reason that Muslim writers often use the word Allah in place of God in their writings, seeing that the word "God" possesses no such exclusive application, inasmuch as it is, and has been, constantly used for things other than the Supreme Deity. So with the word Deity itself. The Persian word *Khuda* for God is applied to men as well. This is the case of every word used in the various languages of the world to mean the *Adored One*.

If Monotheism in its purest form may be taken as the true religion, then Allah is the one word which can preserve the true sense of Monotheism; more especially that one meaning of the word Allah—the Being Who exists necessarily by Himself. This meaning is not conveyed, or even suggested, by any other corresponding word in any other language, while it is, if I may be allowed to say so, the cornerstone of all Divine attributes.

CONCEPTION OF GOD

All religions converge on a common principle. Differences arise from the varying conceptions of God and His attributes which different religions teach, contradicting each other. The religion of the Church in the West—the Catholic Church—claims to have come with a new Epiphany, revealed by the Blood at Calvary, i.e. God suffering punishment for man's sins out of His love for man. To put it shortly, essential differences in different faiths arise from correspondingly different beliefs as to the Divine attributes.

Islam differs from every other religion in its conception of the Divine attributes. If the world could come to an agreement as to its conception of God, the rest would be a matter of course, and all other differences would disappear.

But, to resume our theme, even in this respect, Arabic has a notable superiority over all other languages. While to understand the various conceptions of God in the religions of the world you must read theological books, or listen to the divines of different creeds, in the case of the Quran, all that is necessary is to select a few words

purporting to contain the attributes of God, and consult some good lexicon, and then in a flash you appreciate the whole Muslim faith on the point. Out of the ninety-nine words used in the Quran to designate the various attributes of the Most High, I will take here only four, summed up in the first line of the opening chapter. They are comprehensive enough in their significance to include all the rest. In a way, they give us the whole purport of Islam, pointing out at the same time the chief points of difference between other religions and ourselves. These four attributes are as follows:—

RABB, RAHMAN, RAHIM, MALIK

I deal with them seriatim.

Rabb.—The word literally means to create, to foster, to bring up, to regulate, to accomplish, to complete, to bring a thing from its crudest form to that of its highest perfection. I find in the book of Raghib, the Quran lexicographer, the following:

"*Rabb* signifies the fostering of a thing in such a manner as to make it attain one condition after another until it reaches its goal of completion." The idea of evolution is only a recent discovery. It began with Darwinism. Herbert Spencer developed it and brought it nearly to its present state. It is now generally believed that everything has within itself manifold capacities, and is only awaiting favorable circumstances to approach to its full development. It passes through various evolutionary stages, receiving nutrition for growth at every stage, and eventually achieves its final fruition. If this is what we understand of evolution, then the meaning of the word *Rabb*, given by *Raghib* seven centuries ago, sums up the whole theory of evolution. "Hence *Rabb* is the author of all existence, Who has not only given to the whole creation its means of nourishment, but has also beforehand ordained for each a sphere of capacity, and, within that sphere, provided the means by which it continues gradually to attain its goal of perfection." We find this idea of regulating and arranging, in the meaning of *Rabb*. It leads us to think that He works in accordance with the laws made by Him, and that every

thing coming from Him is regular and law-abiding. The very idea suggested by the meaning of the word *Rabb* that I have given above, i.e. to bring things to perfection, also suggest that things in their inception are potentially perfect, and are tending to perfection. This goes against the belief of "Adam's Fall," which implies the lapsing, going from perfection to degeneracy. Here I do not enter into polemics. My main object is to show that the Arabic word *Rabb* does not allow any room for the theory of the Fall of Adam. In short, one who accepts his God to be Rabb, is a believer in evolution, and cannot believe in the Fall of Adam.

That the word *Rabb* comprehends the word *Ab* (Father), made much of in Christian theology, is obvious. The father may be the physical author of his child, responsible for certain aspects of his education, but *Rabb* looks after the child in his every stage of growth, from the first to the last, embryonic as well as others. The word also suggests to us a course of conduct, by which we may reach our perfection. If the Creator has put in us capacities for perfection, and all His workings are under the laws prescribed by Him, it clearly shows that if we wish to reach our goal, it is for us to discover certain laws and to follow them. It also indicates that we are capable of observing the law, and that our success, or salvation from troubles, depends upon our observance of the law. It is in this respect principally that a Muslim differs from a Christian. If to sin means to violate the law, then sin, in nature, means incapability to observe the law. Thus a belief in sin by nature, regards man as incapable of observing the law; but the word *Rabb*, as I have explained it above, gives the lie direct to any such theory.

CHAPTER 12.

THE MOVING ZOO

Human nature is a conglomeration of the whole animal kingdom. It is an epitome of the vast diversity of temperament and disposition met with in the myriads of God's creatures. It combines within itself, in a potential form, the courage of the lion, the meekness of the lamb, the neatness of the cat and the dirtiness of the pig, the vindictiveness of the camel and the forbearance of the ass; and likewise it partakes of the nature of every species of lower animal. Man is thus a huge moving zoo, within which you can find any animal you would—bird or beast, insect or fish.

Man and animal both receive their peculiar shape and nature from a common stock. The same ingredients go to form the body and nature of a man as those of a dog, a cow or any other thing. Which particular form those ingredients may assume depends upon their quantity in each case. One measure of the same material may give shape to an ant; another, to an elephant. The same difference in magnitude is responsible for the diversity of tendency and disposition each one displays. The camel, for instance, is not only distinct from the cow in its physical frame, but also in its instincts and passions. If the one is a repository of revengefulness, the other is an embodiment of meekness and docility. In brief, the diversity in the measure of stuff common to all, has given rise to diversity both in form and temperament.

Man, however, enjoys a distinction in this respect. Whereas every animal has its nature wrought of a specific measure of ingredients, resulting in a specific tendency, human nature is not so limited. It is cast in an all-comprehensive mold. The numerous measures that go to create, each one of them, this temperament or that, in one particular animal, are all collectively blended together in the nature of man.

To this effect says the Holy Quran: "Verily We have created man of the goodliest fabric." Thus the passions that severally find manifestation in individual animals, are represented as a whole texture of human nature. Besides, in the case of lower animals, the dominating passion is incapable of any regulation or control. It has an unrestrained mastery of its object. The wolf, for instance, or the tiger is endowed with a tendency to tear up weaker animals into pieces. It cannot go against this innate prompting. It is incapable of exercising any check over this call of its nature.

The pig, likewise, cannot shake off its habits of dirtiness and sex-impudence. Similarly, the monkey, the dog, the rabbit, the cock, each has a particular tendency, as the product of a specific measure of ingredients employed in its make. Each must be swayed by the same under all circumstances. Thus these lower animals are possessed of tendencies unalterably chalked out and delineated. No regulation, no evolution, no improvement is possible in their case. But man, the lord of creation, has an unlimited scope of progress. His faculties truly trained and cultivated, he is capable of penetrating into the mysteries of heaven and earth. He can unravel deep Divine secrets.

As already explained, this difference between man and animals is also due to the difference in the measures of formative ingredients which assume different forms of flesh and bones, ingrained with different kinds of passions. In the make of man there is a harmonious and well-balanced mixture of all these. It is thus obvious that the flesh of an animal which may form the food of man, becomes part and parcel of his body and lends additional weight to the like ingredients already existent in his nature. And ultimately, it leads to the manifestation, on his part, of the characteristic tendencies of that animal. For this reason, Islam forbids the eating of the flesh of certain animals.